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PERSWASIVE
TO FREQUENT
COMMUNION.

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EDINBURGH,
Printed by John Reid, Anno
DOM. 1688.



A

A Perswasive to Frequent COMMUNION.

1 Cor. II. 26, 27, 28.

*For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink
this cup, ye do shew the Lords death
till He come.*

*Wherefore whosoever shall eat this
bread, and drink this cup of the Lord
unworthily, is guilty of the Body and
Blood of the Lord.*

*But let a man examine himself, and so let
him eat of that bread, & drink of that cup.*

MY design in this Argument is,
from the consideration of the
Nature of this Sacrament of the
Lords Supper, and of the perpetual
Use of it to the end of the world,
to awaken Men to a sense of their
Duty, and the great Obligation
which lyes upon them to the more
frequent receiving of it. And there
is

is the greater need to make Men sensible of their duty in this particular, because in this last Age by the unwarry discourses of some, concerning the nature of this Sacrament, and the danger of receiving it unworthily, such doubts and fears have been raised in the minds of men as utterly to deter many, and in a great measure to discourage almost the generality of Christians from the use of it ; to the great prejudice and danger of mens Souls, and the visible abatement of piety by the gross neglect of so excellent a means of our growth and improvement in it ; and to the mighty scandal of our Religion , by the general disuse and contempt of so plain and solemn an Institution of our blessed Lord and Saviour.

Therefore I shall take occasion as briefly and clearly as I can to treat of these *Four* points.

First, Of the Perpetuity of this Institu-

frequent Communion. 5

Institution; this the 1. Cor. 11. 26.
Apostle signifies

when he saith, that *by eating this bread, and drinking this cup, we do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

Secondly, Of the *Obligation* that lyes upon all Christians to a frequent observance of this Institution; this is signified in that expression of the Apostle, *as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup;* Which expression considered, and compared together with the practice of the Primitive Church, does imply an obligation upon Christians to the frequent receiving of this Sacrament.

Thirdly, I shal endeavour to satisfy the *Objections* and Scruples, which have been raised in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and sincere Christians, to their receiving this Sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought: Which Objections are chiefly grounded upon

O *A perswasive to*
upon what the Apostle says ;
Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread,
and drink this cup of the Lord unwor-
thily, is guilty of the body and blood of
the Lord ; and doth eat and drink dam-
nation to himself.

Fourthly, What Preparation of our selves is necessary in order to our worthy receiving of this Sacrament : which will give me occasion to explain the Apostl's meaning in these words, Ver. 28. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

I. For the Perpetuity of this Institution, implied in thole words, *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come ;* or the Words may be read imperatively, and by way of precept, *Show ye forth the Lord's death till he come.* In the three verses immediately before, the Apostle particularly declares the Institution of this Sacrament, with the manner and

frequent Communion.

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and circumstances of it, as he had received it, not only by the hands of the Apostles, but, as the Words seem rather to intimate, by immediate Revelation from our Lord himself, Ver. 23. *For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you; that the Lord Jesus in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new Testament in my blood: this do as often as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me.* So that the Institution is in these Words, *This do in remembrance of me.* In which words our Lord commands his Disciples after his Death, to repeat these occasions, of taking and breaking and eating the Bread, and of drinking of the cup, by way of solemn Commemoration of Him. Now

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whether

whether this was to be done by them once only, or oftner; and whether by the Disciples only, during their liyes, or by all Christians afterwards in all successive Ages of the Church, is not so certain, merely from the force of these words, *Do this in remembrance of me:* But what the Apostle adds, puts the matter out of all doubt, that the Institution of this Sacrament was intended, not only for the Apostles, and for that Age, but for all Christians, and for all Ages of the Christian Church; *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come;* that is, until the time of his second coming, which will be at the end of the World. So that the Sacrament was designed to be a standing Commemoration of the Death and Passion of our Lord till he should come to judgement; and consequently the Obligation that lyes upon Christians

by ans to the observation of it; is per-
petual, and shall never cease to the
end of the World.

So that it is a vain conceit and
of meer dream of the Enthusiasts con-
cerning the *seculum spiritus sancti*, the
Age and dispensation of the holy
Ghost, when, as they suppose, all
humane teaching shall cease, and all
external Ordinances and Instituti-
ons in Religion shal vanish, and
there shall be no further use of
them: Whereas it is very plain
from the New Testament, that
Prayer, and outward Teaching,
and the use of the two Sacraments,
were intended to continue among
Christians in all Ages. As for Prayer,
(besides our natural obligation to
this duty, if there were no revealed
Religion) we are by our Saviour
particularly exhorted to Watch and
Pray, with regard to the day of
Judgment, and in consideration of
the uncertainty of the time when it
shal

shal be : And therefore this will always be a Duty incumbent upon Christians till the day of Judgment, because it is prescribed as one of the best ways of preparation for it. That *Outward Teaching* likewise and Baptism were intended to be perpetual, is no less plain, because Christ hath expressly promised to be with the Teachers of his Church in the use of these Ordinances to the end of the World. (*Matth. 28. 19, 20.* Go and Disciple all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost : and lo, I am with you always to the end of the World.) Not only to the end of that particular Age, but to the end of the Gospel-Age, and the consummation of all Ages, as the phrase clearly imports, And it is as plain from this Text, that the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* was intended for a perpetual Institution in the Christian Church, till the second

frequent Communion. H

cond coming of Christ, viz. his coming to judgment: Because St. Paul tells us , that by these Sacramental Signs the Death of Christ is to be represented, and commemorated till he come. *Do this in remembrance of me , for as oft as ye eat this Bread , and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lords Death till he come.*

And if this be the End and Use of this Sacrement , to be a solemn remembrance of the Death and Sufferings of our Lord, during his absence from us ; that is, till his coming to Judgement , then this Sacrament will never be out of date till the second coming of our Lord. The consideration whereof should mightily strengthen and encourage our Faith , in the hope of Eternal Life, so often as we pertake of this Sacrament ; since our Lord hath left it to us as a memorial of himself till he come , to translate his Church into Heaven , and as a sure pledge that

that he will come again at the end of the World, and invest us in that Glory, which he is now gone before to prepare for us. So that as often as we approach the Table of the Lord, we should comfort our selves with the thoughts of that blessed time, when we shall eat and drink with him in his Kingdom, and shall be admitted to the great Feast of the Lamb, and to eternal Communion with God, the Judge of all, and with our blessed and glorified Redeemer, and the holy Angels, and the Spirits of Just men made perfect.

And the same consideration should likewise maketh us afraid to receive this Sacrament unworthily, without due Preparation for it, and without worthy effects of it upon our Hearts and Lives. Because of that dreadfull sentence of condemnation, which at the second coming of our Lord shall be past upon thole, who by the profanation of this solemn

Institi-

Institution trample under foot the Son of God , and contemn the blood of the Covenant ; that Covenant of Grace and Mercy , which God hath ratified with Mankind by the Bloud of his Son. The Apostle tells us , that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily , is guilty of the body and Bloud of the Lord , and eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* This indeed is spoken of temporal Judgment (as I shall shew in the latter part of this Discourse) but the Apostle likewise supposeth , that if these temporal Judgments had not their effect , to bring men to repentance , but they still persisted in the profanation of this holy Sacrament , they should at last be condemned with the world . For as he that partaketh worthily of this Sacrament , confirms his interest in the promises of the Gospel , and his Title to eternal life ; so he that receives this Sacrament unworthily , that is , without due

*A perswasive to
reverence, and without fruits meet
for it; nay, on the contrary, con-
tinues to live in sin whilst he com-
memorats the death of Christ, who
gave himself for us, that he might
redeem us from all iniquity, this
man aggravates and seals his own
damnation, because he is guilty of
the body and bloud of Christ, not
only by the contempt of it, but by
renewing in some sort the cause of
his sufferings, and as it were Crucifi-
*cing to himself afresh the Lord of life,
and glory, and putting him to an open
shame.* And when the great Judge
of the World shall appear, and
pass final sentence upon men, such
obstinate and impenitent Wretch-
es as could not be wrought upon, by
the remembrance of the dearest love
of their dying Lord, nor be engaged
to leave their sins by all the tyes and
obligations of this holy Sacrament,
shall have their portion with Pilate
*and Judas, with the chiefe Priests and
Souldiers**

Souldiers, who were the betrayers and murtherers of the Lord of life and glory; and shall be dealt with all as those who are in some sort guilty of the body and bloud of the Lord. Which severe threatening ought not to discourage men from the Sacra-ment, but to deterr all those from their sins, who think of engaging themselves to God by so solemn and holy a Covenant. It is by no means a sufficient reason to make men to fly from the Sacra-ment, but certainly one of the most powerfull arguments in the world, to make men forsake their sins; as I shall shew more fully in the third head of this Discourse.

II. The Obligation that lyes upon all Christians to the frequent obser-vance and practice of this Instituti-on. For though it be not necessarily implied in these words, as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup; yes if we compare these words of the

Apostle

*A Perswasive to
Apostle with the usage and practice of
Christians at that time, which
was to communicate in this
holy Sacrament, so often as they
solemnly met together to worship
God, they plainly suppose and re-
commend to us the frequent use of
this Sacrament, or rather imply an
obligation upon Christians to em-
brace all opportunities of receiving
it. For the sense and meaning of
any Law or Institution is best under-
stood by the general practise, which
follows immediatly upon it.*

And to convince men of their ob-
ligation hereunto, and to engage
them to a suitable practice, I shall
now endeavour with all plainness
and force of perswasion I can: And
so much the more, because the ne-
glect of it among Christians is grown
so general, and a great many per-
sons from a superstitious awe and
reverence of this Sacrament, are by
degrees fallen into a profane neglect
and contempt of it.

I shal

I shal briefly mention a threefold Obligation lying upon all Christians to frequent Communion in this holy Sacrament, each of them sufficient of it self , but all of them together of the greatest force imaginable, to engage us hereunto.

1. We are obliged in point of indispensable duty, and in obedience to a plain precept, and most solemn institution of our blessed Saviour , that great *Lawgiver* who is *able to save and to destroy* , as St James calls him: He hath bid us do this, And *Saint Paul* who declares nothing in this matter , but what he tells us he *received from the Lord* ; admonisheth us to do it *often*. Now for any man that professeth himself a Christian to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of a plain Law and Institution of *Christ*, is utterly inconsistent with such a profession. To such our Lord may say as he did to the *Jews*, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord,*

*A perswasive to
and do not the things which I say.* How far the ignorance of this institution, or the mistakes which men have been led into about it, may extenuate this neglect is another consideration. But after we knew our Lord's will in this particular, and have the Law plainly laid before us, there is no cloak for our sin. For nothing can excuse the willfull neglect of a plain Institution from a downright contempt of our Saviours authority

2. We are likewise obliged hereunto in point of Interest. The benefits which we expect to be derived and assured to us by this Sacrament are all the blessings of the new Covenant, the forgiveness of our sins, the grace and assistance of God's holy Spirit, to enable us to perform the conditions of this Covenant required on our part; and the comforts of God's holy Spirit to encourage us in well-doing, and to support us under sufferings; and the glorious reward

reward of eternal life. So that in neglecting this Sacrament we neglect our own interest & happiness, we forsake our own Mercies, and Judge our selves unworthy of all the blessings of the Gospel; and deprive our selves of one of the best means & advantages of confirming and conveying these blessings to us. So that if we had not a due sense of our duty, the consideration of our own *interest* should oblige us, not to neglect so excellent and so effectual a means of promoting our own comfort and happiness.

3. We are likewise particularly obliged in point of Gratitude to the carefull observance of this Institution. This was the particular thing our Lord gave in charge, when he was going to lay down his life for us, *Do this in remembrance of me.* Men use religiously to observe the charge of a dying friend, and unless it be very difficult and unreasonable, to

A perswasive to
do what he desires ; But this is the charge of our best friend (nay of the greatest friend and benefactor of all mankind) when he was preparing himself to die in our stead , and to offer up himself a sacrifice for us; to undergo the most grievous pains & sufferings for our sakes, and to yield up himself to the worst of temporal Deaths. That he might deliver us from the bitter pains of Eternal Death. And can we deny him any thing he asks of us, who was going to do all this for us ? Can we deny him this? so little grievous and burthen som in it self ; so infinitely beneficial to us ? Had such a friend, and in such circumstances bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it ? How much more, when he hath only said , *Do this in remembrance of me?* when he hath only commanded to us one of the most natural and delightfull Actions, as a fit representation and memorial of

of his wonderfull Love to us , and of his cruel sufferings for our sakes ; when he hath only enjoyned us, in a thankfull commemoration of his goodness , to meet at his table, and to remember what he hath done for us ; to look on Him whom we have pierced, and to resolve to grieve and wound him no more ? Can we without the most horrible ingratitude neglect this dying charge of our Sovereign and our Saviour, the great friend and lover of souls ? A command so reasonable , so easie, so full of blessings and benefits to the faithfull observers of it !

One would think it were no difficult matter , to convince men of their duty in this particular , and of the necessity of observing so plain an Institution of our Lord, that it were no hard thing to perswade men to their interest, and to be willing to partake of those great and manifold blessings which all Christians believe

to be promised and made good to
the frequent and worthy Receivers
of this Sacrament. Where then lyes
the difficulty ? What should be
the cause of all this backwardnes,
which we see in men to so plain, so
necessary, and so beneficial a duty ?
The truth is, men have been greatly
discouraged from this Sacrament, by
the unwarry pressing and inculcating
of two great truths ; *the danger of*
the unworthy receiving of this holy Sacra-
ment, and *the necessity of a due prepara-*
tion for it. Which brings me to the

III. Third Particular I proposed,
which was to endeavour to satisfie
the *Objections* and *Scruples* which
have been raised in the minds of
men, and particularly of many de-
vout and sincere Christians, to their
great discouragement from the re-
ceiving of this Sacrament, at least
so frequently as they ought. And
these *Objections*, I told you, are
chiefly grounded upon what the A-
postle

postle sayes v. 27. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and bloud of the Lord. And again v. 29. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself. Upon the mistake & misapplication of this text, have been grounded Two objections, of great force to discourage men from this Sacrament, which I shall endeavour with all the tenderness and clearness I can to remove. First, That the danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it seems the safest way not to receive at all. Secondly, That so much Preparation and worthiness being required in order to our worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of devout Christians can never think themselves duly enough qualified for so sacred an Action.

i. That the danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it
seems

seems the safest way wholly to refrain from this Sacrament, and not to receive it at all. But this Objection is evidently of no force, if there be (as most certainly there is) as great or a greater danger on the other hand, *viz.* in the neglect of this Duty: And so though the danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by not receiving, yet the danger of neglecting and contemning a plain Institution of Christ is not thereby avoided. Surely they in the *Parable* that refused to come to the *Marriage-feast* of the King's Son, and made light of that gracious Invitation, were at least, as faulty as he who came without a wedding garment. And we find in the conclusion of the *Parable*, that as he was severely punished for his disrespect, so they were destroyed for their disobedience. Nay of the two, it is the greater sign of contempt wholly to neglect the Sacrament, than to partake of it without

out some due qualification. The greatest indisposition that can be for this holy Sacrament is ones being a bad man, and he may be as bad, and is more like to continue so, who wilfully neglects this Sacrament, than he that comes to it with any degree of reverence and preparation, though much less then he ought: And surely it is very hard for men to come to so solemn an ordinance without some kind of religious aw upon their spirits, and without some good thoughts and resolutions, at least for the present. If a man that lives in any known wickedness of life, do before he receive the Sacrament set himself seriously to be humbled for his sins, and to repent of them, and to beg God's grace and assistance against them; and after the receiving of it, does continue for some time in these good resolutions, though after a while he may possibly relapse into

the same sins again; this is some kind of restraint to a wicked life, and these good moods and fits of repentance and reformation are much better then a constant and uninterrupted course of sin: Even this righteousness, which is but as the morning cloud, and the early dew, which so soon passeth away, is better than none.

And indeed scarce any man can think of coming to the Sacrament, but he will by this consideration be excited to some good purposes, and put upon some sort of endeavour to amend and reform his life; and though he be very much under the bondage and power of evil habits, if he do with any competent degree of sincerity (and it is his own fault if he do not) make use of the excellent means and instrument for the mortifying and subduing of his lusts, and for the obtaining of God's grace and assistance, it may please

please God by the use of these means, so to abate the force and power of his lusts, and to imprint such considerations upon his mind, in the receiving of this holy Sacrament, and preparing himself for it, that he may at last break off his wicked course, and become a good man.

But, on the other hand, as to those who neglect this Sacrament, there is hardly any thing left to restrain them from the greatest enormities of life, and to give a check to them in their evil course; nothing but the penalty of humane laws, which men may avoid and yet be wicked enough. Heretofore men used to be restrained from great and scandalous vices by shame and fear of disgrace, and would abstain from many sins, out of regard to their honour and reputation among men: But men have hardened their faces in this degenerate Age,

and those gentle restraints of modesty which governed and kept men in order heretofore, signify nothing now a days. Blushing is out of fashion, and shame is ceas'd from among the children of men.

But the Sacrament did always use to lay some kind of restraint upon the worst of men and it did not wholly reform them, it would at least have some good effect upon them for a time: If it did not make them good, yet it would make them resolve to be so, and have some good thoughts and impressions upon their minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing of very bad consequence, to discourage men so much from the Sacrament, as the way hath been of late years; and that many men who were under some kind of check before, since they have been driven away from the Sacrament, have quite let loose the

reins, and prostituted themselves to all manner of impiety and vice. And among the many ill effects of our past confusions, this is none of the least; That in many congregations of this Kingdom, Christians were generally disused and deterred from the Sacrament, upon a pretence that they were unfit for it; and being so, they must necessarily incur the danger of unworthy receiving; and therefore they had better wholly to abstain from it. By which it came to pass, that in very many places this great and Solemn Institution of the Christian Religion was almost quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of it, and the remembrance of Christ's death even lost among Christians: So that many Congregations in England might justly have taken up the complaint of the Woman at our Saviour's sepulchre, *They have*
taken

30. . . . A perswasive to
taken away our Lord , and we know
not where they have laid him.

But surely men did not well con-
consider what they did nor what
the consequence of it would be,
when they did so earnestly diswade
men from the Sacrament. 'Tis true
indeed the danger of unworthy re-
ceiving is great ; but the proper in-
ference and conclusion from hence
is not , that men should upon this
consideration be deterred from the
Sacrament, but that they should be
affrighted from their sins, and from
that wicked course of life, which is
an habitual indisposition and un-
worthiness. *St. Paul* indeed (as I
observed before) truly represents,
and very much aggravates the dan-
ger of the unworthy receiving of
this Sacrament ; but he did not de-
terr the *Corinthians* from it , because
they had sometimes come to it
without due reverence , but ex-
horts them to mend what had been
amiss

amis, and to come better prepared and dispoled for the future. And therefore after that terrible declaration in the Text, *Whosoever shall eat this bread, & drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body, and blood of the Lord.* he does not add, therefore let Christians take heed of coming to the Sacrament, but let them come prepared and with due reverence, not as to a common meal, but to a solemn participatoin of the body and bloud of Christ; *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

For, if this be a good reason to abstain from the Sacrament, for fear of performing so sacred an action in an undue manner, it were best for a bad man to lay aside all Religion, and to give over the exercise of all the duties of piety, of prayer, of reading and hearing the Word of God; because there is a proportionable danger in the unworthy and unprofitable

fitable use of any of thele. *The prayer of the wicked* (that is, of one that resolves to continue so) *is an abomination to the Lord.* And our Saviour gives us the same caution concerning hearing the word of God, *take heed how ye hear.* And St. Paul tells us, that those who are not reformed by the doctrine of the *Gospel*, it is *the savour of death*, that is, deadly and damnable to such persons.

But now will any man from hence argue, that it is best for a wicked man not to pray, not to hear or read the word of God, lest by so doing he should endanger and aggravate his condemnation? And yet there is as much reason from this consideration to persuade men to give over praying, and attending to God's word, as to lay aside the use of the Sacrament. And it is every whit as true, *that he that prays unworthily, and bears the word of God unworthily, that is without fruit and benefit, is guilty of a great*

great contempt of God, and of our blessed Saviour; and by his undevout prayers, and unfruitful hearing of Gods word, does further and aggravat his own damnation : I say, this is every whit as true, *as he that eats and drinks the Sacrament unworthily, is guilty of a high contempt of Christ, and eats and drinks his own judgement,* so that the danger of the unworthy performing this so sacred an action is no other-
wise a reason to any man, to abstain from the Sacrament, than it is an argument to him to cast off all Religion. He that unworthily useth or per-
forms any part of Religion, is in an evil and dangerous condition; but he that casts off all Religion plungeth himself into a most desperat state, and does certainly damn himself to avoid the danger of damnation: Be-
cause he that casts of all Religion, throws off all the means whereby he should be reclaimed and brought into a better state. I cannot

more

more fitly illustrate this matter than by this plain Similitude. He that eats and drinks intemperately endangers his health and his life, but he that to avoid this danger will not eat at all, I need not tell you what will certainly become of him in a very short space.

I here are some conscientious persons who abstain from the Sacrament, upon an apprehension that the sins which they shall commit afterwards are unpardonable. But this is a great mistake; our Saviour having so plainly declared, *that all manner of sin shall be forgiven men, except blasphemy against the holy Ghost*; such as was that of the Pharisees, who as our Saviour tells us, blasphemed the holy Ghost, in ascribing those great miracles which they saw him work, and which he really wrought by the Spirit of God, to the power of the Devil. Indeed to sin deliberately after so solemn an engagement to

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the contrary is a great aggravation of sin, but not such as to make it unpardonable. But the neglect of the Sacrament is not the way to prevent these sins ; but on the contrary, the constant receiving of it, with the best preparation we can, is one of the most effectual means to prevent sin for the future and to obtain the assistance of God's grace to that end. And if we fall into sin afterwards we may be renewed by repentance ; *for we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins* ; and as such, is in a very lively and affecting manner exhibited to us in this blessed Sacrament of his body broken and, his blood shed for the remission of our sins. Can we think that the primitive Christians, who so frequently received this holy Sacrament, did never after the receiving of it fall into any deliberate sin ? undoubtedly many of them did; but far be

it from us to think, that such sins were unpardonable, and that so many good Men should because of their careful and conscientious observance of our Lord's institution, unavoidably fall into condemnation.

To draw to a conclusion of this matter, such groundless fears and jealousies as these may be a sign of a good meaning, but they are certainly a sign of an injudicious mind. For if we stand upon these Scruples, no Man perhaps was ever so worthily prepared to draw near to GOD in any duty of Religion, but there was still some defect or other in the disposition of his mind, and the degree of his preparation. *But if we prepare our selves as we can, this is all that GOD expects.* And for our fears of falling into sin afterwards, there is this plain answer to be given to it; *that the danger of falling into sin is not prevented by neglecting the Sacrament but increased;* because a powerful and probable

probable means of preserving Men from sin is neglected. And why should not every sincere Christian, by the receiving of this Sacrament, and renewing his Covenant with GOD, rather hope to be confirmed in goodness, and to receive farther assistances of God's grace and holy Spirit, to strengthen him against sin, and to enable him to subdue it; than trouble himself with fears, which are either without ground, or if they are not, are no sufficient reason to keep any man from the Sacrament? We cannot surely entertain so unworthy a thought of God, and our blessed Saviour, as to imagine that he did institute the Sacrament, not for the furtherance of our Salvation, but as a snare, and an occasion of our ruine and damnation. This were to pervert the gracious design of God, and to turn the cup of Salvation into a cup of deadly poison to the souls of men.

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All then that can reasonably be inferred from the *danger of unworthy receiving is*, that upon this consideration men shold be quickned to come to the Sacrament with a due preparation of mind, and so much the more to fortifie their resolutions of living suitably to that holy Covenant which they solemnly renew every time they receive this holy Sacrament. This consideration ought to convince us of the absolute necessity of a good life, but not to deter us from the use of any means which may contribute to make us good. Therefore (as a learned Divine says very well) this Sacrament can be neglected by none, but those that do not understand it, but those who are unwilling to be tyed to their duty, and are afraid of being engaged to use their best diligence to keep the commandments of Christ: And such perlons have no reason to fear being in a worse condition, since they are already in so bad a stac.

And thus much may suffice for an-

swer,

swer to the first Objection concerning the great danger of unworthy receiving this holy Sacrament. I shall proceed to the

2. Second Objection, which was this; That so much preparation and worthiness being required to our worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of Christians can never think themselves duly enough qualified for so sacred an Action.

For a full answer to this Objection, I shall endeavour briefly to clear these Three things; First, That every degree of Imperfection in our preparation for this Sacrament is not a sufficient reason for men to refrain from it. Secondly, That a total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and substance of it, though it render us unfit at present to receive this Sacrament, yet it does by no means excuse our neglect of it. Thirdly, That the proper inference and conclusion from the total want of a due preparation, is not to cast off all thoughts of receiving the Sacrament, but immediately

to set upon the work of preparation, that so we may be fit to receive it. And if I can clearly make out these three things, I hope this Objection is fully answered.

I That every degree of Imperfection in our preparation for this Sacrament is not a sufficient reason for men to abstain from it ; for then no man should ever receive it : For who is every way worthy and in all degrees and respects duly qualified, to approach the presence of God in any of the duties of his Worship and Service ? Who can wash his hands in innocency, that so he be perfectly fit to approach God's Altar ? There is not a man on earth that lives and sins not. The Graces of the best men are imperfect, and every imperfection in grace and goodness is an imperfection in the disposition & preparation of our minds for this holy Sacrament : But if we do heartily repent of our sins, and sincerely resolve to obey and perform

form the terms of the Gospel, and of that *Covenant* which we entered into by Baptism, and are going solemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this Sacrament, we are at least in some degree, and in the main qualified to partake of this holy Sacrament; And the way for us to be more fit is to receive this Sacrament frequently, that by this spiritual food of God's appointing, by *this living bread that comes down from heaven*, our souls may be nourished in goodness, and new strength and virtue may be continually derived to us, for the purifying of our hearts, and enabling us to run the ways of Gods commandments with more constancy and delight. For the way to grow in grace, and to be strengthened with all might in the inner man, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which by Christ Jesus are to the praise and glory of God, is with care and conscience to use those means which

God hath appointed for this end: And if we will neglect the use of these means, it is to no purpose for us to pray to God for his grace and assistance. We may tire our selves with our devotions, and fill heaven with vain complains, and yet by all this importunity obtain nothing at God's hand: Like lazy beggers that are always complaining and always asking, but will not work, will do nothing to help themselves, and better their condition, and therefore are never like to move the pity and compassion of others. If we expect God's grace and assistance, we must work out our own salvation in the carefull use of all these means which God hath appointed to that end. That excellent degree of goodnes, which men would have to fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be had but by the use of it. And therefore it is a preposterous thing for men to insist upon having the end before they

they will use the means that may further them in the obtaining of it.

2. The total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree, but in the main and substance of it, though it render us unfit at present to receive this Sacrament, yet does it by no means excuse our neglect of it. One fault may draw on another, but can never excuse it. It is our great fault that we are wholly unprepared, and no man can claim any benefit by his fault, or plead it in excuse or extenuation of this neglect. A total want of preparation and an absolute unworthiness is impenitency in an evil course, a resolution to continue a bad man, not to quit his lusts, and to break off that wicked course he hath lived in: But is this any excuse for the neglect of our duty, that we will not fit ourselves for the doing of it with benefit and advantage to ourselves? A father commands his son to ask of him a blessing every day, and is

ready to give it him ; but so long as he is undutiful to him in his other actions , and lives in open disobedience , so bids him to come in his sight . He excuseth himself from asking his fathers blessing , because he is undutiful in other things , and resolves to continue so . This is just the cause of neglecting the duty God requires . and the blessings he offers to us in the Sacrament , because we have made our selves incapable of so performing the one as to receive the other , and are resolved to continue so . We will not do our duty in other things , and then plead that we are unfit and unworthy to do it in this particular of the Sacrament .

3. The proper inference and conclusion from a total want of due preparation for the Sacrament , is not to cast off all thoughts of receiving of it , but immediately to set about the work of preparation , that so we may be fit to receive it .

For

For if this be true, that they who are absolutely unprepared ought not to receive the Sacrament, nor can do it with any benefit; nay by doing it in such a manner render their condition much worse, this is a most forcible argument to repentance and amendment of life. There is nothing reasonable in this case, but immediately to resolve upon a better course, that so we may be meet partakers of these holy Mysteries, and may no longer provoke God's wrath against us by the wilfull neglect of so great and necessary a duty of the Christian Religion. And we do wilfully neglect it, so long as we do wilfully refuse to fit and qualifie our selves for the due and worthy performance of it. Let us view the thing in a like case; A pardon it graciously offered to a rebel, he declines to accept it, and modestly excuseth himself, because he is not worthy of it. And why is he not worthy? Because

cause he resolves to be a rebel, and then his pardon will do him no good, but be an aggravation of his Crime, Very true; and it will be no less an aggravation that he refuseth it for such a reason, and under a pretence of modesty does the most imprudent thing in the world. This is just the case: and in this case there is but one thing reasonable to be done, and that is, for a man to make himself capable of the benefit as soon as he can, and thankfully to accept of it: But to excuse himself from accepting of the benefit offered, because he is not worthy of it, nor fit for it, nor ever intends to be so, is as if a man should desire to be excused from being happy, because he is resolved to play the fool and to be miserable. So that whether our want of preparation be total, or only to some degree it is every way unreasonable. If it be in the degree only, it ought not to

to hinder us from receiving the Sacrament; If it be total, it ought to put us immediatly upon removing the impediment, by making such preparation as is necessary to the due and worthy receiving of it. And this brings me to the

IV. Fourth and last thing I proposed , viz *What preparation of ourselves is necessary in order to the worthy receiving of this Sacrament.* Which I told you would give me occasion to explain the *Apostle's meaning* in the last part of the *Text,* But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. I think it very clear from the occasion and circumstances of the *Apostle's discourse* concerning the *Sacrament*, that he does not intend the examination of our state, whether we be Christians or not, and sincerely resolved to continue so ; and consequently that he does not here speak of our habitual

ual preparation by the resolution of a good life. This he takes for granted, that they were Christians and resolved to continue and persevere in their Christian profession : But he speaks of their actual fitness and worthiness at that time when they came to receive the Lord's Supper. And for the clearing of this matter, we most consider what it was that gave occasion to this discourse At the 20th verse of this Chapter he sharply reproves their irreverent and unsuitable carriage at the Lord's Supper. They came to it very disorderly, *one before another.* It was the custom of Christians to meet at their *Feast of Charity*, in which they did communicate with great sobriety and temperance; and when that was ended, they celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Now among the *Corinthians* this order was broken, the rich met and excluded the poor from this common feast: And after
irre-

irregular feast (one before another eating his own supper as he came) they went to the Sacrament in great disorder ; *One was hungry, having eaten nothing at all; Others were drunk, having eaten intemperately ; and the poor were despised and neglected.* This the Apostle condemns as a great profanation of that solemn institution of the Sacrament, at the participation whereof they behaved themselves with as little reverence, as if they had been met at a common Supper or Feast. And this he calls *not discerning the Lord's body*, making no difference in their behaviour between the Sacrament and a common meal ; which irreverent and contemptuous carriage of theirs he calls, *eating and drinking unworthily*; for which he pronounceth them guilty of *the body and blood of the Lord*, which were represented and commemorated in their *eating of that bread, and drinking of that cup*. By which irrever-

rent and contemptuous usage of the body and bloud of our Lord, he tells them that they did incur the Judgment of God ; which he calls, *eating and drinking their own Judgment.* For that the word *κρίσις* which our Translators render *damnation*, does not here signify eternal condemnation, But a temporal Judgment and chastisement in order to the prevention of eternal condemnation, is evident from what follows ; *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth & drinketh Judgment to himself.* And then he says, *For this cause many are weak & sickly among you, & many sleep :* That is for this irreverence of their God had set among them several diseases, of which many had died. And then he adds, *For if we would Judge our selves, we should not be judged.* For if we would Judge our selves ; whether this be meant of the publick Censures of the Church or our privat censuring of our selves, in order to our future amend-

amendment and reformation is no^t certain. It of the latter, which I think most probable, then Judging here is much the same with examining our selves. ver. 28 And then the Apostle's meaning is, that if we would censure and examine our selves, so as to be more careful for the future, we sh^{ould} escape the Judgment of God in these temporal punishments: But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. But when we are Judged; that is, when by neglecting thus to judge our selves, we provoke God to judge us; we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world; that is, he inflicts these temporal judgments upon us to prevent our eternal condemnation. Which plainly shews that the judgment here spoken of is not eternal condemnation. And then he concludes, Wherefore, my Brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry

for one another. And if any man bung-
er, let him eat at home, that ye come
not together unto judgment: Where the
Apostle plainly shews both what was
the crime of unworthy receiving,
and the punishment of it. Their
crime was, *their irreverent and disorderly*
participation of the Sacrament; and
their punishment was, *those temporal*
judgments which God inflicted upon them
for this their contempt of the Sacrament.

Now this being, I think, very
plain; we are proportionably to un-
derstand the precept of examination
of our selves, *before we eat of that*
bread, and drink of that cup. But let
a man examine himself; that is, con-
sider well with himself what a sacred
Action he is going about, and what be-
haviour becomes him, when he is cele-
brating this Sacrament instituted by
our Lord in *memorial of his body and*
blood, that is, *of his death and passion;*
And if heretofore he hath been guil-
ty of any disorder and irreverence
such

(such as the *Apostle* here taxeth them withal) let him censure and judge himself for it, be sensible of and sorry for his fault, and be carefull to avoid it for the future; and having thus Examined himself, let him eat of that bread, and drinke of that cup. This, I think, is the plain sense of the *Apostle's* discourse; and that if we attend to the scope and circumstances of it, it cannot well have any other meaning.

But some will say, is this all the preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the Sacrament, that we take care *not to come drunk to it*, nor to be guilty of any irreverence and disorder in the celebration of it? I answer in short, this was the particular unworthiness with which the *Apostle* taxeth the *Corinthians*, and which he warns them to amend, as they they desire to escape the Judgments of God, such as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage

carriage of theirs , so unsuitable to the holy Sacrament : He finds no other fault with them at present in this matter , though any other sort of irreverence will proportionably expose men to the like punishment . He says nothing here of their habitual preparation , by the sincere purpose and resolution of a good life , answerable to the rules of the Christian Religion ; this we may suppose he took for granted . However , it concerns the Sacrament no more than it does Prayer or any other religious Duty . Not but that it is very true , that none but those who do heartily embrace the Christian Religion , and are sincerely resolved to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it , are fit to communicat in this solemn acknowledgment and profession of it . So that it is a practice very much to be countenanced and encouraged , because it is of great use , for

frequent Communion.

for Christians by way of preparation for the Sacrament to examine themselves in a larger sense than in all probability the *Apostle* here intended ; I mean, to examine our past lives and the actions of them, in order to a sincere repentance of all our errors and miscarriages, and to fix us in the steady purpose and resolution of a better life ; particularly, when we expect to have the forgiveness of our sins sealed to us , we should lay aside all enmity and thoughts of revenge, and heartily forgive those that have offended us, and put in practice that universal love and charity which is represented to us by this holy Communion. And to this purpose we are earnestly exhorted in the publick office of the *Communion* by way of due preparation and disposition for it , to *repent us truly of our sins past , to amend our lives , and to be in perfect charity with all men , that so we may*

56 . . . *A perswasive to
men, to meet partakers of those holy my-
steries.*

And because this work of examining our selves concerning our state and condition, and of exercising repentance towards God, and charity towards men, is incumbent upon us ~~as~~ we are *Christians*, and can never be put in practice more seasonably, and with greater advantage, than when we are meditating of this Sacrament, therefore besides our habitual preparation by repentance, and the constant endeavours of a holy life, it is a very pious and commendable custom in Christians before their coming to the Sacrament, to set aside some particular time for this work of examination. But how much time every person should allot to this purpose, is matter of prudence; and as it needs not, so neither indeed can it be precisely determined. Some have greater reason to spend more time upon this work than

frequent Communion.

than others, I mean these, whose accounts are heavier, because they have long run upon the score, and neglected themselves; and some also have more leisure and freedom for it, by reason of their easie condition and circumstances in the world; and therefore are obliged to allow a greater portion of time for the exercises of piety and devotion. In general, no man ought to do a work of so great moment and concernment slighty and perfunctorily. And in this, as in all other actions, the end is principally to be regarded. Now the end of examining ourselves is to understand our state and condition, and to reform whatever we find amiss in our selves. And provided this end be obtained, the circumstances of the means are less considerable; whether more or less time be allowed to this work, it matters not so much, as to make sure that the work be thoroughly done. And

And I do on purpose speak thus
cautiously in this matter , because
some pious persons do perhaps err
on the stricter hand, and are a little
superstitious on that side in so much
that unless they gain so much time
to set a part for a solemn prepara-
tion , they will refrain from the Sa-
crament at that time , though o-
therwise they be habitually prepar-
ed : This I doubt not proceeds from
a pious mind ; but as the *Apostle* says
in another case, about the Sacra-
ment, *Shall I praise them in this ? I*
praise them not. For provided there
be no wilfull neglect of due prepa-
ration , it is much better to come
so prepared as we can , nay I think
it is our duty so to do, rather than
to abstain upon this *punctilio*. For
when all is done , the best prepara-
tion for the Sacrament , is the ge-
neral care and endeavour of a good
life ; and he that is thus prepared
may receive at any time when op-
portunity

pportunity is offered, though he had no particular forelight of that opportunity. And I think in that case such a one shall do much better to receive than to refrain, because he is habitually prepared for the Sacrament, though he had no time to make such actual preparation as he desired: And if this were not allowable, how could Ministers communicat with sick persons at all times, or perswade others to do it many times upon very short and sudden warning?

And indeed we cannot imagine that the primitive Christians, who received the Sacrament so frequently, that for ought appears to the contrary they judged it as essential and necessary a part of their publick worship as any other part of it whatsoever, even as their Hymns and Prayers, and reading and interpreting of the Word of God: I say we cannot well conceive how they who celebrated

60 *A perswasive to*
celebrated it so constantly, could
allot any more time for a solemn
preparation for it, than they did
for any other part of divine worship:
And consequently that the *Apostle*,
when he bids the *Corinthians* exa-
mine themselves, could mean no
more than that considering the na-
ture and ends of this Institution they
should come to it with great rever-
ence; and reflecting upon their
former miscarriages in this matter,
should be carefull upon this admo-
nition to avoid them for the future,
and to amend what had been amiss;
which to do requires rather resoluti-
on and care than any long time of
preparation.

I speak this, that devout persons
may not be intangled in an appre-
hension of a greater necessity than
really there is, of a long and solemn
preparation every time they receive
the Sacrament. The great necessity
that lyes upon men is to live as be-
comes

comes Christians, and then they can never be absolutely unprepared. Nay I think this to be a very good preparation, and I see not why Men should not be very well satisfied with it, unless they intend to make the same use of the Sacrament that many of the Papists do of Confession and Absolution, which is to quit with God once or twice a year, that so they may begin to sin again upon a new score.

But because the Examination of our selves is a thing so very usefull, and the time which men are wont to set apart for their preparation for the Sacrament is so advantageous an opportunity for the practice of it; therefore I cannot but very much commend those who take this occasion, to search and try their ways, and to call themselves to a more solemn account of their actions. Because this ought to be done sometime, and I know no fitter time for

for it than this. And perhaps some would never find time to recollect themselves, and to take the condition of their souls into serious consideration, were it not upon this solemn occasion.

The sum of what I have said is this, that supposing a person to be habitually prepared by a religious disposition of mind, and the general course of a good life, this more solemn actual preparation is not always necessary; And it is better when there is an opportunity to receive without it, than no to receive at all: But the greater our actual preparation is, the better. For no man can examine himself too often, and understand the state of his soul too well, and exercise repentance, and renew the resolutions of a good life too frequently. And there is perhaps no fitter opportunity for the doing of all this, than when we approach the Lord's table, there to

com-

commemorate his death , and to renew our Covenant with him to live as becomes the Gospel.

All the Reflection I shall now make upon this Discourse , shall be from the consideration of what hath been said, earnestly to excite all that profess and call themselves Christians to a due preparation of themselves for this holy Sacrament , and a frequent participation of it, according to the intention of our Lord andaviour in the institution of it , and the undoubted practice of Christians in the primitive and best times , when men had more devotion , and fewer scruples about their duty.

If we do in good earnest believe , that this Sacrament was instituted by our Lord , in remembrance of his dying love , we cannot but have a very high value and esteem for it upon that account . Me thinks so often as we read the institution of it , there

these words of our dear Lord, *Do this in remembrance of me*, and consider what he who said to them, did for us, this dying charge of our best friend should stick with us, and make a strong impression upon our minds: Especially if we add to these, those other words of his, not long before his death, *Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends; ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* It is a wonderful love which he hath expressed to us, and worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. And all that he expects from us, by way of thankful acknowledgment, is to celebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent participation of this blessed Sacrament. And shall this charge, laid upon us by him, who laid down his life for us, lay no obligation upon us to the solemn remembrance of that unparalleled kindness, which is the fountain of so

so many blessings and benefits to us. It is a great sign we have no great sense of the benefit, when we are so unmindfull of our Benefactour, as to forget him days without number. The obligation he hath laid upon us, is so vastly great, not only beyond all requital; but beyond all expression; that if he had commanded us some very grievous thing, we ought with all the readiness and cheerfulness in the world to have done it; how much more when he hath imposed upon us so easie a commandment, a thing of no burthen, but of immense benefit? When he hath only said to us; Eat, O friends; and Drink, O beloved? When he only invites us to his table, to the best and most delicious feast that we can partake of on this side heaven?

If we seriously believe the great blessings which are there exhibited to us, and ready to be conferred u-

pon, us we should be so far from ne-
glecting them , that we should
heartily thank God for every op-
portunity he offers to us of being
made partakers of such benefits.
When such a price is put into our
hands, shal we want hearts to make
use of it? Me thinks we should long
with *David* (who saw but the sha-
dow of these blessings) to be satis-
fied with the good things of God's
house, and to draw near his Altar ;
and should cry out with him , *O*
when shall I come and appear before Thee?
my soul longeth , yea even fainteth for
the courts of the Lord , and my flesh
crieth out for the living God. And if
we had a just esteem of things , we
should account it the greatest infeli-
city and Judgment in the world to
be debarred of this priviledge ,
which yet we do deliberately and
frequently deprive our selves of.

We exclaim against the Church
of Rome with great impatience , and
with

frequent Communion.

with a very just indignation, for robbing the People of half of this blessed Sacrament, and taking from them the *cup of blessings*, the *cup of salvation*; and yet we can patiently endure for some moneths, nay years, to exclude our selves wholly from it. If no such great benefits and blessings belong to it, why do we complain of them for hindring us of any part of it? But if there do, why do we by our own neglect deprive our selves of the whole?

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our graces, and slow progress and improvement in Christianity, whilst we wilfully despise the best means of our growth in goodness, Well do we deserve that God should send leanness into our souls! and make them to consume and pine away in perpetual doubting and trouble! if, when God himself doth spread a Table for us, and let be-

more us the bread of life, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thankfulness.

F I N I S.

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